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UNCLAS THE HAGUE 003060

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DUTCH PARLIAMENT CONCURS WITH SFIR EXTENSION

REF: THE HAGUE 2987 (NOTAL)

1. (U) On December 11, the Dutch parliament concurred with the November 28 decision by the Cabinet to extend Dutch participation in the Stabilization Force in Iraq for six months. The Dutch presently have approximately 1100 military personnel (mostly Dutch Royal Marines) serving as part of the UK's Multi-National Division South-East in AlMuthanna Province. Only the far-left opposition Green Left (GL) and Socialist (SP) Parties opposed the extension, as they are against Dutch involvement in Iraq altogether. While supporting the extension, the governing Christian Democrats (CDA), Liberals (VVD) and Liberal Democrats (D66) as well as the main opposition Labor Party (PvdA) all expressed concern about threats to Dutch troops' safety but accepted Defense Minister Kamp's assurances that measures had been taken to address them. (Kamp recently dispatched 70 Dutch Special Forces commandoes to perform reconnaissance missions in the Dutch sector.) Members also accepted Kamp's assurances that the Dutch were receiving adequate information from the UK about possible threats (this had previously been a subject of parliamentary concern).

2. (U) Kamp readily admitted that the security situation had become more difficult. He said that measures had been taken to prevent terrorist attacks on Dutch forces but "we cannot reassure the Chamber as we are not reassured ourselves." In concurring with the extension, Parliament expressed strong support for the Dutch troops' role in enhancing security by training Iraqi police and other security forces and thus facilitating the transfer of power to the Iraqi people.

3. (SBU) Comment: Support for the Cabinet's November 28 decision was largely a foregone conclusion (a formal vote of approval is in fact not necessary in the Dutch system; however the Chamber always debates potentially controversial decisions). Nevertheless both Kamp and parties on the center-right and center-left used yesterday's debate to make plain their concerns about the risk to Dutch forces should there be eventual Dutch casualties in Iraq. End comment.

Sobel